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XXVII.—*On the Human Remains found in the Excavations at Wroxeter.* By THOMAS WRIGHT, ESQ., M.A., F.S.A., etc., Corresponding Member of the Imperial Institute of France.

(*Read at the Meeting of the British Association at Cambridge, October 6th, 1862, and afterwards before the Ethnological Society*).

AT the Oxford meeting of the British Association a grant of money was made to assist in the excavations on the site of the Roman city of Uriconium, on the borders of Wales, with a more special view to the human remains found there in their ethnological bearing. You are aware that we found there a regular interment of bodies with strangely distorted skulls, which have been the subject of considerable discussion, and it was my intention, during the present year, to renew the exploration of this locality, and examine every part of the site, with more care than had previously been given to it. Several circumstances, partly local and partly personal, have delayed the execution of this design. Meanwhile I think it will not be out of place if I lay before you a general sketch of facts relating to the question to which they belong, namely, that of the human remains which have been found in the course of our excavations at Wroxeter.

These remains have been met with under three widely different classes of circumstances. First, we have the regular cemetery of Roman Uriconium, outside the walls of the ancient city, scattered probably round its whole circuit, but massed chiefly, as far as we can yet judge, along the side of the great road now called the Watling Street, leading from Uriconium to London. In the second place, we have to consider the numerous remains of men, women, and children, massacred when the city was taken and destroyed, which are found in the course of digging within the walls. And third and last, we have the skeletons found under rather unusual circumstances, which had evidently been interred within the walls, and the skulls of the majority of which presented a uniform distortion of form.

The cemetery was the object of our explorations during the latter part of the autumn of last year. I need hardly explain that over a great part of the site of the ancient city we are obliged to time our excavations to the conveniences of the farmers, and it happened that at the time I have just mentioned there was no crop on the ground of one large field which formed part of the cemetery. Our men are now at work on another portion of the cemetery, in a field adjoining to the former. The results of our researches in the cemetery have been in many points of view of the utmost importance, but they have added little to our strictly ethnological knowledge. Although a very considerable number

of interments have been opened, not a single instance has yet occurred in which a body had been buried without cremation. We thus find sepulchral urns and other vessels, in earthenware and glass, such as usually occur under such circumstances, with the ashes of the dead, but of course neither skulls, nor indeed any perfect bones of the body. Two or three coins were found, chiefly in what had been isolated tombs, and evidently deposited singly with each interment, and these coins were all of the earlier emperors, such as Claudius, Hadrian, and Trajan; but in the interments in the cemetery, with one exception only, no coins were found. I am inclined to conclude that this must be taken as showing us that, although in the early period of the Roman rule in Britain the Roman practice of burial was strictly adhered to in all its details; after a while, when the armies and population were recruited almost entirely with Germans and other people who were not of Italian descent, although they still adhered to the general forms of the Roman customs, they omitted some parts which were perhaps less in accordance with prejudices or sentiments of their own. They may, perhaps, among other things, have not thought it necessary, in burying their dead, to export the current coin of the realm, and send it away, even in such small sums, to Hades. This, however, is certain, that all the discoveries yet made in the sepulchres of the inhabitants of Uriconium point to one conclusion, that the burning of the dead was practised by them to the very latest period of the existence of the city, and apparently to the exclusion of all other modes of interment. This is itself a very important fact in reference to questions which it is no part of the present paper to bring under discussion.

On this portion of the area we are exploring, the deceased were interred with regularity and ceremony; but such was not the case with the remains of the dead which are found scattered among the ruins of the city. The state of these ruins, and all the circumstances connected with them, prove beyond doubt that Uriconium was taken by some of the barbarians who assisted in tearing to pieces the enfeebled body of the Roman empire; that a frightful massacre of the inhabitants followed its capture, and that the plunderers set fire to it before they abandoned it. The parts we have chiefly excavated formed an extensive mass of buildings in the middle of the city, consisting of the basilica, the public baths, an inclosed market place, and some other adjacent building, and one side of the forum. Many of the terrified inhabitants, pursued by the barbarians, who were masters of the city, had evidently sought refuge in these buildings, which were full of hypocausts, and other places difficult of access, and not very likely to be explored, even by victorious savages, almost as eager of blood as of plunder. In what appeared to be an entrance

court of the baths, one or two skeletons of men were found where they had evidently been overtaken by their pursuers and slain. In a corner of the same court the skull and some of the bones of an infant of the age when children are carried in the arms, was found under circumstances which would lead us to imagine that its mother had been perhaps overtaken in a room above, at the top of a staircase which, now uncovered, still leads down to the hypocausts, whither she was probably flying to conceal herself, and her child snatched from her, murdered, and tossed out through a window into the yard. In one of the hypocausts, which had been approached from the large inner court of the baths, three skeletons were found near together, under rather curious circumstances. They were those of an old man and two women, who had entered by the small passage from the inner court which admitted the slaves who attended to the hypocausts, had crept between the rows of pillars of the hypocausts to the further side, and there the man had crouched into the corner, while the women appear to have laid themselves down between the pillars and the wall. The massacrers were not likely to follow them, but their hiding place was nevertheless an unsafe one—much the same thing as taking refuge in the chimney when your house is on fire, and when the plunderers set fire to the building these three individuals were no doubt smothered. Their remains were found in the positions in which they had died; and, which was not the least interesting circumstance connected with their fate, the man, with the feelings of avarice often characteristic of old age, had carried with him his money in a little wooden casket, and we found it lying near him. We thus obtained an element of interesting evidence as to the date of the destruction of Uriconium. A second example of similar evidence was met with in a workshop opening upon the forum, where some individual, in his hasty flight, perhaps closely pursued, had dropped his money in the doorway. In this instance the coins had been contained in a small earthenware vessel, which had been broken in the fall, and the money a little scattered. In another hypocaust, to the eastward of that containing the three skeletons, another skeleton was found, which shows that in the midst of the terror with which the population of Uriconium was overwhelmed in this terrible moment, there was a general impulse to seek concealment in the hypocausts. Other bodies, including more than one child, were found in different parts of the ruins, and in the supposed market place were found the remains of six dogs, which appeared also to have been massacred by the merciless invaders of the town.

Of these numerous victims, the bones, and especially the skulls, were generally so much broken and decayed that very few of the latter could be preserved and deposited in the Wroxeter Museum,

at Shrewsbury. To judge, however, from the small number of examples which admitted of examination, they presented no peculiarities which might not be found in any civilized town, and nobody who has examined the remains of Roman Uriconium, which have been brought to light during the last three years, will doubt that it was a town in a high state of civilization. The skull of the old man, found in the hypocaust, is remarkably well formed.

We now come to the most remarkable, if not the most important, part of our subject. At a corner where what is now called the Watling Street road turned down to the river and crossed it by a ford, is a large open field stretching on a level to the edge of the high bank, or cliff, which overlooks the Severn. In the course of trenching this field for the purpose of ascertaining if there were remains of buildings under it, we found, not far from the turn of the Watling Street road, a series of regular interments of human bodies. The ground is an orchard planted with a few fruit trees, and covered with grass. The bodies were laid on their backs, stretched out, with their arms extended by their sides, or, in one or two cases, one arm bent across the body, and parallel to each other east and west, but without any indications which would lead us to conjecture the age to which they belong. Of five skulls first taken up, four were singularly and uniformly *deformed*, having an unnatural twist which causes one eye to advance before the other, and gives an obliquity to the face. I regret to say that I have not been able to bring the skulls themselves here, but a tolerable notion may be formed of them from the drawings made by an artist of Shrewsbury, which are here exhibited. Further trenching of the ground brought to light ten other skulls, three of which presented the same deformity, while three were not deformed, and the other four were in too imperfect a condition to be satisfactorily examined, though some of the fragments seemed to have belonged to similarly deformed skulls. Thus, out of eleven skulls which could be examined, seven presented the same remarkable deformity, with this only difference, that in one or two instances the twist is in the contrary direction from that in the others. There has arisen, I need hardly tell you, a difference of opinion on the subject of these skulls, whether the deformity existed before death, or whether it has arisen from posthumous causes; and the question does not appear yet to have been satisfactorily, or at all events finally decided. It is not my intention to enter into it any further than to state one or two facts relating to the circumstances under which the skulls were found, which require to be attended to in the physiological discussion.

The field in which they lay is within the edge of the town, on

a height above the river, and near a probable entrance to the town, but where I believe the river itself was the only defence. As it struck me, at first sight, that the deformity might have been produced artificially in infancy by the pressure of two boards, and as we know that some of the barbarians, as the Huns for example, did produce such deformity in their children, I thought that these might possibly have been the remains of some of the attacking party, who had been slain on this spot, and who had been buried by their companions before they left ; for it appears to have been an open place without any buildings. But this was a mere hasty conjecture, which I am not at all inclined to sustain. On the contrary, I am now disposed to suspect that these bodies belong to a later period than was at first supposed. The soil in which they are interred is mixed, both above them and below, with Roman *débris*, which could only be the case in earth which had been formed upon the surface of the Roman level, and this formation would have required a considerable period of time. At the date of the destruction of the town, these bodies, which were when discovered only from about a foot to eighteen inches below the surface, would have been above ground. Moreover, there is a very suspicious proximity to the modern churchyard, from which this field is only separated by a road. At the same time, it must be remarked that this road is the Watling Street road, and that it must therefore have been older than the period at which these bodies were interred.

My friend Dr. Henry Johnson, in a very able paper lately read before the Royal Society, has endeavoured to show that there are chemical elements in the earth in which these remains lay, which might have so far affected the substance of the bone as to render it pliable and capable of being thus deformed after death. But, supposing this to be the case, we seem to want entirely the mechanical causes of deformation. They were not buried sufficiently deep to have a weight of earth upon them—in fact, when buried, their graves must have been very shallow ; no weight of buildings or of ruins has lain upon them, but, on the contrary, from the quantity of small fibres of roots which are mixed with the earth, I suspect that during the middle ages it had been covered with low brushwood, which, indeed, was generally the case with deserted ruins. Again, we can hardly understand why such a cause affecting bones in this field, should not equally affect the skulls of the bodies interred in the adjacent churchyard, or why all the deformed skulls in this field should have the same deformity, or why the other bones of the body should not be similarly affected. The skulls of the Roman inhabitants, which are found with a great weight of ruins upon them, have, in no instance yet observed, undergone any similar deformity. It must be added that

the few skulls not deformed which were found among these deformed skulls in the orchard, are comparatively good types of skulls, and that one is well developed and finely formed.

I think it is much to be desired, as calculated to throw further light on the real history of these skulls, that the whole of the ground should be carefully explored by trenching ; and it is my intention that this shall be done, as soon as convenient with local circumstances.

XXIX.—*On the Formation and Institution of the Caste System—the Aryan Polity.* By G. M. TAGORE, Professor of Hindu Law in University College, London.

(Read before the Ethnological Society, June 2nd, 1863.)

I PROPOSE to lay before the members of this Society a short account of the formation and institution of the caste system in India. It is manifestly a subject of considerable difficulty, and I am not aware that it has received that fulness of treatment which it deserves. I must, therefore, be pardoned for taking the liberty of bespeaking your indulgence during the discussion of this most important topic. In my attempt to write what I must consider at best a conjectural essay on the history and institution of the caste system in India, I shall be obliged to dwell incidentally on many other topics that are more or less connected with the growth of a system that has to a considerable extent repelled all aggressive measures for so many centuries. Neither the Mohammedan conquest nor the civilizing influence of British legislation has been able to create an effective breach in its ranks, or to penetrate the solidarity of its composition. The history of Brahmanism being necessarily connected with the growth and maintenance of the caste system in India, I must, in a rapid way, sketch out before you the origin and development of Brahmanism, as an introduction to the subject I have undertaken to discuss.

The Hindu religion, before it had settled itself into Brahmanism, was preceded by two stages or periods of development ; viz., the Vedic and the Aryan period, which, for want of better expressions, I shall denominate respectively Vedism and Aryism, as distinct from and precedent to the more modern form of Brahmanism.

The state of religion during the Vedic period was pure elemental worship, accompanied by its retinue of sacrifices and invocations of a more primitive form and character. They had sacrificial fires over which oblations of clarified butter were poured, and the fermented juice of the Soma plant was offered to